





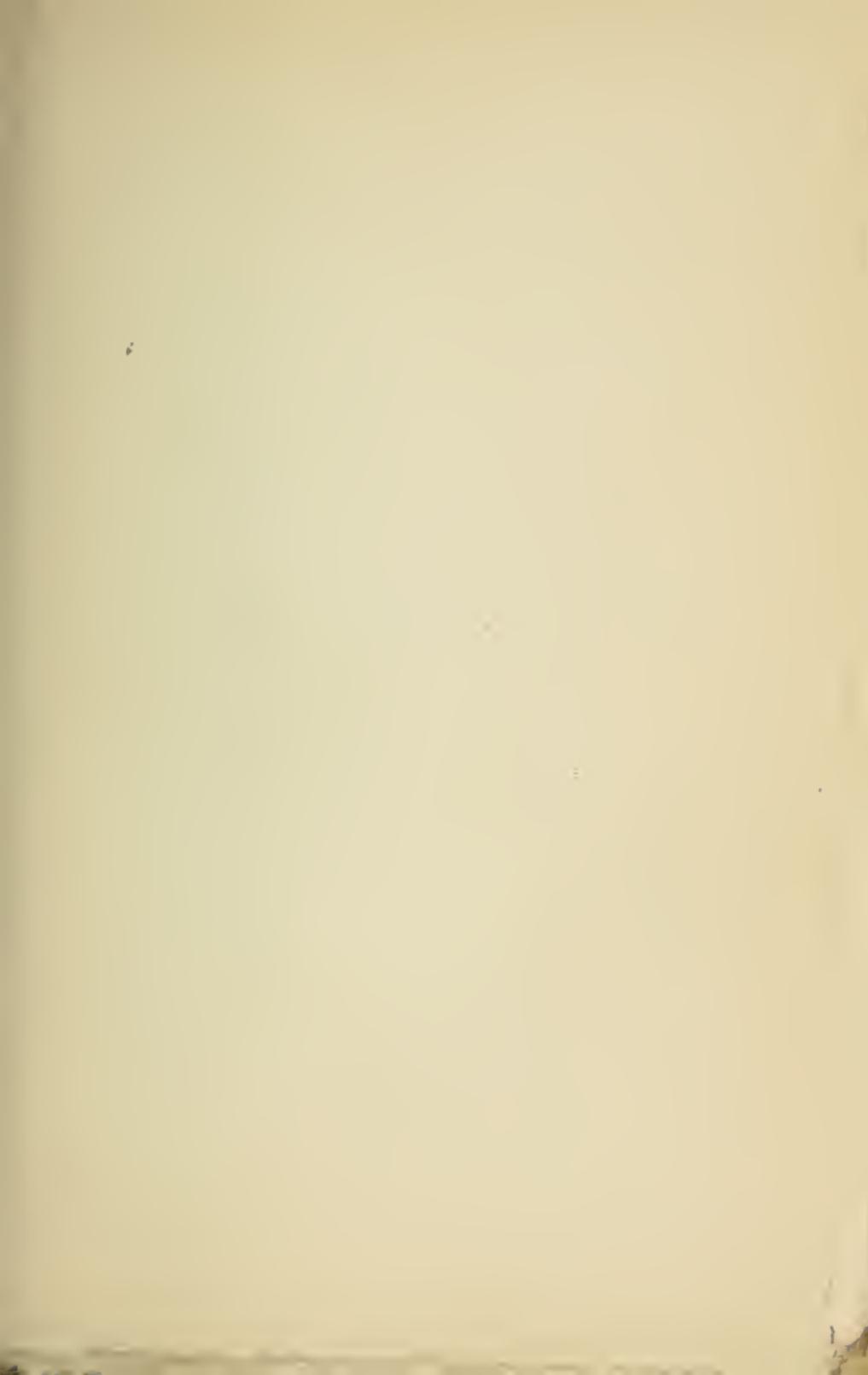
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# Minuscula



# Minuscula

Lyrics of Nature, Art and Love

By

Francis William Bourdillon



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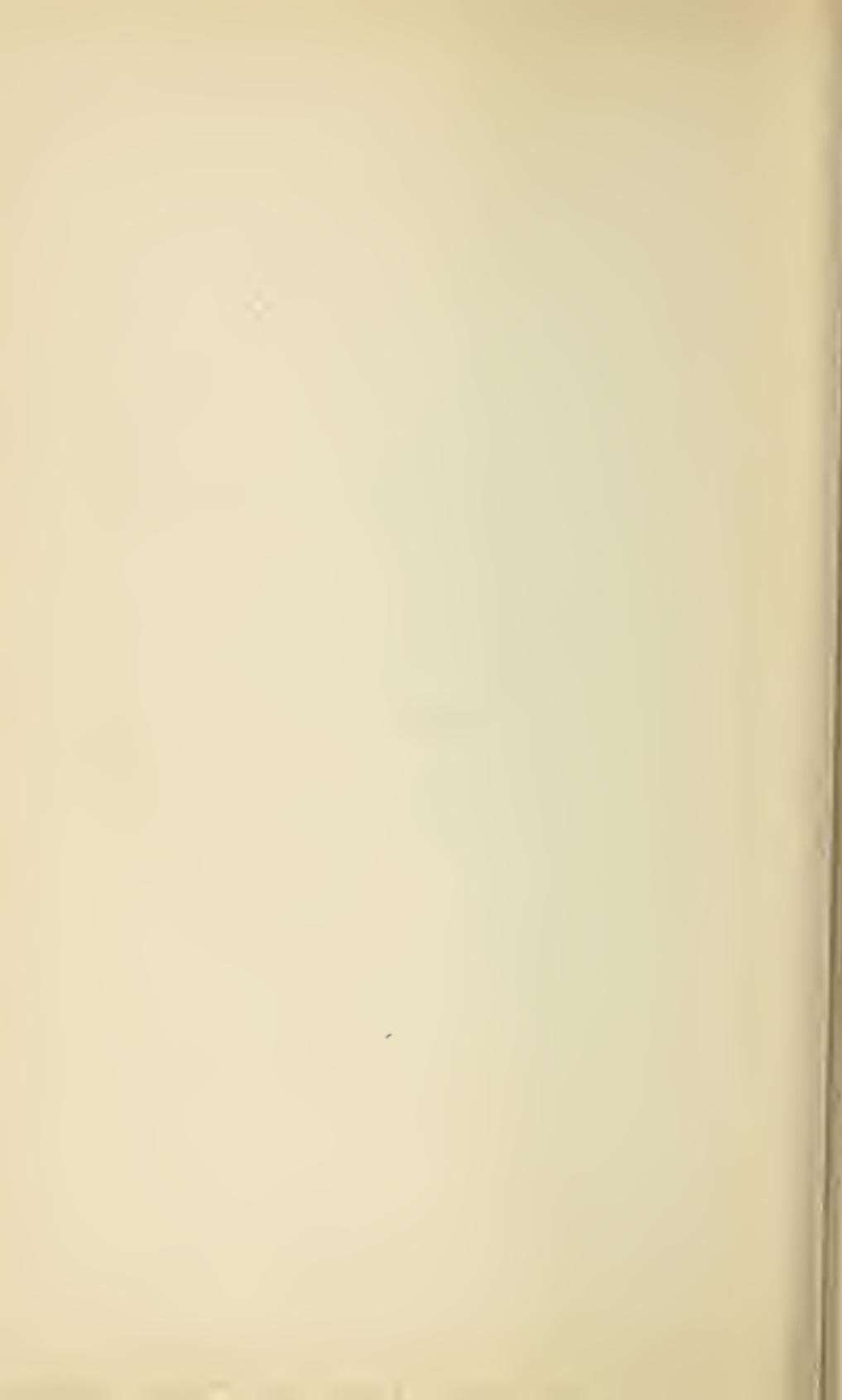


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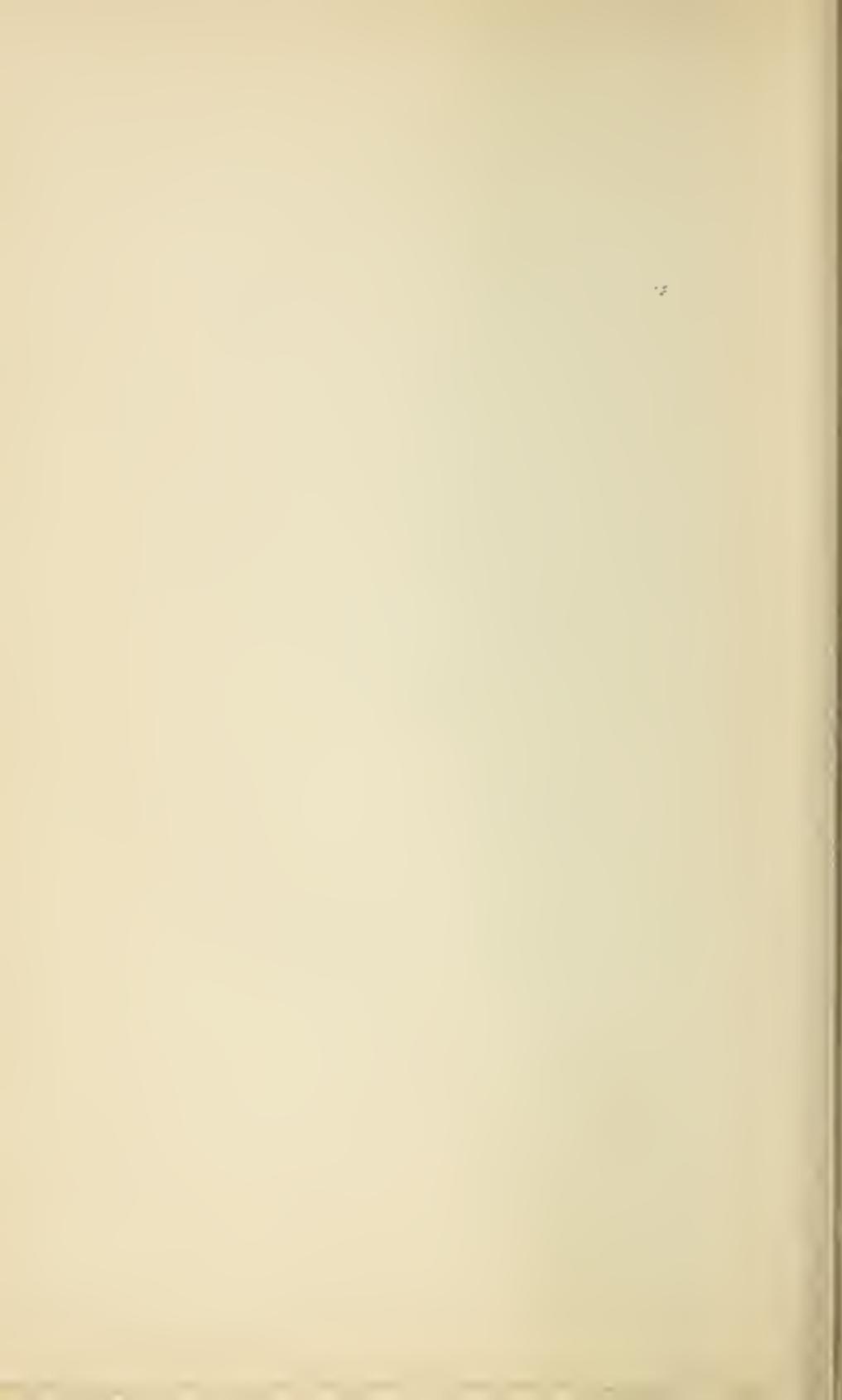
The poems contained in this little volume are for the most part the siftings of three yet smaller volumes of verse, published anonymously at Oxford in 1891, 1892, and 1894, and now withdrawn from sale. But I have added certain new poems, which in the Contents are marked with an asterisk, besides four which appeared in the American edition of *Ailes d'Alouette*.

\* Love Lies Bleeding '91  
Love in a Mist '92 } Blackwe  
Clunyseis '94 }

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# Minuscula



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Part I

Art and Nature



## The Shelley Memorial

*(in University College, Oxford)*

Itaque testimonio estis vobis met ipsis: quod filii estis eorum qui prophetas occiderunt.

THIS is not Shelley—this dead mask of Death !

Here is no marble Immortality,  
But fleshly petrifaction. Could the breath  
Come back to this, yet nevermore should  
he,

The stately spirit of full stature, deign  
In this small corpse to lodge, and live again.

This is not Shelley ! Have our eyes not seen  
Shelley, the child of morning, with the  
light

Of Heaven about him, and a brow serene  
As Orient noonday, smile on Death and  
Night,

As the unhappy sisters of man's sorrow,  
That might not live to the bright human  
morrow ?

This marble but records Death's victory  
 In Death's own lying language ; who doth  
 boast  
 That o'er all Being he hath empery,  
 And nothing liveth when the breath is lost.  
 So cold, so white, he cries, your Shelley lay !  
 Such lifeless limbs ! Such heavy soul-less clay !

Where is his Immortality—ah, where ?  
 Is this the sky of Shelley ? These his stars ?  
 This small blue dome, as low, as near, as bare  
 As infant man believed it, and these sparse  
 Gold spangles ! Could ye mock our Shelley  
 more  
 'Twixt him and Heav'n than draw this tinsel  
 o'er ?

Yet who here standing blames the sculptor's  
 art ?  
 So deftly moulded is each marble limb !  
 Such deathly languor lies on every part !  
 So like is this to what was left of him,  
 When the wave-wantons, tiring of a prey  
 Teased vainly, flung the emptied flesh away !

Not his the fault, the sculptor's ! Is it ours,  
 Who leave no more to Art her old domain  
 Of Fancy, and though sky and sea she scours,  
 No more allow her to present us plain  
 Her aery visions, or to unseen things  
 Lend bodies visible and birdlike wings ?

She bears Egyptian bondage, set to make  
 No likeness but what workman souls may  
 see  
 And test by finger-touch—the fowler's lake,  
 The fisher's river-side, the woodman's tree,  
 The face in soul-less hours of common life,  
 The body naked for the surgeon's knife.

Where are her ancient glories, when to man  
 She brought a revelation all divine,  
 And opened his dull eyes, and bade him  
 scan  
 Shy Nature, to discern why she did shine,  
 For all her sorrows, with so calm a light ;  
 And, through the outward, woke the inward  
 sight ?

Here had the Greek made plain in mortal  
form

The seed of the Immortals, the half-god ;  
Here had the Florentine shewn flesh all warm  
With mystic fire-tints from the Rose of  
God ;  
The rudest missal-scribe, his rough child-way,  
Had drawn the soul-shape 'scaping from  
the clay.

We only, lords of lightning and of light,  
All Nature's magic working to our wand,  
Are yet forbidden the most simple sight  
Of the informing soul in sea or land,  
In hills and clouds and the blue deeps above,  
And woman's beauty, and the face we love.

One was there, son of England, whom not yet  
The dust of years hides deeply, who per-  
chance  
With visionary touch had made forget  
This dead marred body, left but to enhance  
The bright miraculous likeness upward drawn,  
The unprisoned spirit springing to the Dawn.

But Blake, the last Prometheus, is no more,  
And the dark Heaven has shut her gates  
again.

Turn to the sleeper here, if in the lore  
He left us we may find some balm for  
pain,  
May find him living, though this gray-hued  
Death  
So grimly to his dying witnesseth.

There do we find him, with his young-god's  
face  
For ever to the East—for ever sure  
Of the delaying sunrise, and the grace  
To dawn upon the dark earth, full and  
pure  
And holy, though a hundred such as he  
Should die in faith before that day shall be.

## An Artist's Litany

WISDOM to others—to see  
 Thy face and live ;  
 But the hunger of Beauty to me,  
 Good Father, give !

In Earth and Heaven to know  
 Transfiguring light :  
 To drink of the sunset glow  
 With the inward sight :

The glory of Heaven to learn  
 From a wayside weed :  
 The Eden of God to discern  
 In a daisied mead :

To look through lustrous eyes  
 To the soul of a girl,  
 And covet no selfish prize  
 Of casquet or pearl :

Crown of the Maker's craft,  
The white-limbed Eve,  
To worship, and no warm waft  
Of the flesh receive !

Wisdom to others—to see  
Thy face and live :  
But the hunger of Beauty to me,  
Good Father, give !

## When Music Dies

THE doors of Eden close  
When music dies.  
The odours of the rose,  
The warm wind's sighs—

Ev'n as a dream they fade :  
The dew-washed feet  
Pass from the cedarn shade  
To sands and heat.

## Joy's Way

SKIMMING an idle stone along the lake  
    An idle day,  
Sudden I saw a little rainbow wake  
    Among the spray,  
Which, trying oft, I could no more remake.

This is Joy's way !  
All in a moment on our eyes to break,  
    Then flee away,  
Nor all our labour e'er can bring it back,  
    Nor all our play.

## To a Lark

O LITTLE singing bird,  
If I could word  
In as sweet human phrase  
Thy hymn of praise,

The world should hearken me  
As I do thee,  
And I should heed no more  
Than thou, but soar !

## Queen Spring

I MET Queen Spring in the Hanger  
 That slopes to the river gray ;  
 Yestreen the thrushes sang her,  
 But she came herself to-day.

She is fair as a mortal maiden ;  
 But all I saw was the clouds  
 With a new refulgence laden  
 As they drifted by in crowds.

Her voice is sweet as a viol ;  
 But all I heard was the song  
 Of the blackbird making trial  
 If yet his notes were strong.

Her touch is soft as the water ;  
 But all I felt was the kiss  
 Of the warm South wind that had  
 brought her  
 On those wide wings of his.

Her breath is sweet as the showers ;  
But all I caught was the scent  
Of her sacred primrose flowers  
Flinging incense where she went.

For so do the things diviner  
Come within human ken,  
Through some perception finer  
Than the fivefold senses of men.

## Maytime

Oh, the Maytime  
 Is the playtime !  
 Petals falling,  
 Cuckoos calling,  
 Here and there ;  
 Flowers springing  
 Wood-birds singing  
 Everywhere.

Oh, the woodland  
 Is the good land !  
 All that rare is  
 In Maytime there is.

In sweet places  
 Children's features  
 Take the graces  
 Of wild creatures,  
 Till their faces  
 Gleam and dimple  
 With the simple  
 Look of flowers ;  
 And their brightening  
 Is the enlightening  
 Of dark hours.

## An English Eden

Roses drop their petals all around  
In that enchanted ground,  
And all the air is murmurous with sound  
From the white-tumbling weir ;  
So that all lesser voices heard anear  
Do half unreal appear.

As one half-waking from a dreamless sleep,  
Is faint his thought to keep,  
Thus floating ever 'twixt the night's black  
deep  
And the blank glare of day ;  
So in that Eden pauses life half-way  
'Twixt dawning and full day.

### An Autumn Song

LAY by, sweet woodlands, your array  
 Of gold and green !  
 How should ye wear it in the day  
 When Spring, your Queen,  
 Is chased away  
 By rebels from her bright demesne ?

Farewell, delight of lustrous leaves  
 And shining flowers !  
 Many an unseen hand unweaves  
 The royal bowers.  
 Earth's self receives  
 Sullenly the usurping Powers.

## Autumn Singers

WHEN woods are gold and hedges gay  
With jewelled Autumn's brief array,  
And diamonds sprinkle every spray,  
    The robin sings  
His soft melodious well-a-day  
    For dying things.

Yet often, when a riotous night  
Has ruined half the wood's delight,  
There breaks a Spring day, warm and  
    bright,  
    And the thrush sings,  
As though his April were in sight,  
    Of quickening things.

## Corydalis

THERE is a little plant that weaves  
 About the withered gorse its leaves  
     Upon the Malvern Hills ;  
 And lifts a tiny tuft of flowers,  
 To take the sunshine and the showers,  
     The heats and dewy chills.

We may not think a soul is there,  
 Nor courage, though it seems to dare  
     The rains, the early snows ;  
 Nor patience, though so late it clings,  
 Nor pity for unhappier things,  
     Though round rough stems it grows.

Nor any joy to be admired,  
 Nor soft desire to be desired,  
     Although so fair it be.  
 Yet, gentle maid, I pray thee make  
 A parable hereof, and take  
     This fable unto thee !

## Catchwords

THOUGH joy and grief and pain  
More fast our memories bleach  
Than sun and wind and rain  
The fall'n leaves of the beech :

Yet what light things remain !  
Some look, some little speech,  
Remembered, brings again  
His life's great hour to each.

## Found Drowned

THE sigh of the sea-wind wakes not  
The dead in the deep :  
The lapse of the light wave breaks not  
Their dreamless sleep.

Nor the sorrow of those that loved them,  
Nor the love of the loved, again  
Can make this thing that the light waves fling  
A creature of joy and pain.

### The Myriad-Mother

THE storm is dying with the day,  
And crimson fringes fret the gray ;  
The shifting clouds show lakes of blue,  
And in the West the sun looks through.

Listen, through all the woods is plain  
The music of melodious rain,  
And from the oak the blackbird's psalm  
Hushes the weeping woods to calm.

O Nature, whom thy children trust,  
Mother of myriads, it is just !  
My grief has had thy tears awhile ;  
Smile now for others who can smile !

## At Even

O TOILERS of the day !  
How, when the even-calm  
Droppeth like sweetest balm  
Upon your weary brows, can ye not  
pray ?  
But nay !  
Some to the hot play-house,  
Some to the rank carouse,  
Forgetting God, ye go astray.  
And all the while above,  
The lamps of heavenly love,  
The shining stars, show the more  
excellent way.

## Winged Ants

THESE little crawling ants for one day's space  
 Had Iris-wings of gossamer, and flew,  
 Light as the down of thistles, in the face  
 Of smiling heaven, whose frown not yet  
 they knew.  
 The world was all a wonder, green and  
 blue ;  
 And light the labour down soft winds to race,  
 Ere yet they learned earth's dust to be their  
 place,  
 Toil their inheritance, and death their due.

O human toilers ! though no good ye know  
 But labour, and no certain goal but death,  
 Was not your youth in dreams iridian  
 dressed ?  
 Why will ye those bright memories forgo,  
 Nor list again your childhood's lore, which  
 saith,  
 Not life laborious, but life winged, is  
 best ?

### The Lodestar

WHAT shipmen steering by yon star  
·What separate ports have gained !  
What climes, what seas, what havens far  
By that one guide attained !

So shines the unreached Heavenly Light  
To every seeking soul,  
And guides each several seeker right  
Unto his several goal.

## In a Cage

O HEART, what boots thy wild wing-beating  
 At prison bars ?  
 To thee the hope of flowers is cheating  
 As hope of stars.

What sadness can the sunlight bring thee,  
 The air so mild ?  
 What sorrow can the blithe birds sing thee  
 To weep so wild ?

Alas ! the Spring is in all places,  
 And soft the air ;  
 The woods are bright with primrose faces,  
 And I not there !

## Poeta atque Navis

POETA. Art thou, poor wave-beat hull, the  
same

We watched amid the port's acclaim  
Receive on wreathèd prow thy  
name ?

Poor ship ! How hard have dealt  
with thee

The fortunes of the wind and sea,  
Who seemed for fairer fate to be !

NAVIS. And thou, poor world-sick soul, art  
thou  
The same on whose unwrinkled  
brow  
Was set for crown the laurel bough ?

Now have I rest from wind and  
wave :

But thou hast still the storms to  
brave  
Of life whose haven is the grave.

## Shadows

Most strange it is to stand when shades are  
free—

Loosed from the light that chained them  
here and there,  
To hold their hushed dominion every-  
where—

To stand and commune with them silently.

For one was bound by daylight's tyrant  
glare

The faithful follower of a cur to be ;  
And one was forced—light fetters needed he—  
To wait all day upon a maiden fair.

And each wore then the shape of love or  
loathing

Of him whom Day their daylong master  
made ;

Now all have doffed their loved or hated  
clothing,

And mingle o'er the earth in shapeless  
shade.

And we, when Death shall lose our souls from  
Self,

Shall shudder to have served so foul an elf.

## The Sinner

I saw one crouching in a place of gloom,  
 Loaded with chains, abject and miserable.  
 A prayer broke from him : suddenly the room  
 Lightened, and lo, an angel veritable  
 Straight from God's presence. Th' iron  
 ponderable  
 Shrivelled like web-work of Arachne's loom ;  
 He stretched his limbs, he changed that living  
 tomb  
 For space and light and airs esperitable.

I saw him kneeling, weeping praise to God.  
 I looked again : the prisoner, lately free,  
 Of his own will had entered that dark  
 door  
 Again—again his limbs the fetters wore  
 By his own will. O Jesu ! can Thy blood,  
 Can all the might of Heaven save him, or  
 me ?



Part II

Love



### Love's Largesse

THE heaven has emptied all her stars  
: Into the glimmering sea ;  
Yet in yon skies the lifted eyes  
Find not one less to be.

So Love gives all ; and lo, the hand  
Emptied, the head stripped bare,  
Are ringed and crowned more richly  
round  
With jewels yet more rare.

## Life and Love

BRIGHT is that wave of night  
With a happy tremulous light  
On whose wide-wandering breast  
One wavering star doth rest.

Till the night-wind dies away,  
And the star fades out in the day,  
And the wave sinks down to sleep  
Unknown in the heaving deep.

### Mother-of-Pearl

Not from all shells in Indian bays  
Are pearls to win ;  
Nor hath the gentle heart always  
A love within.

But where the pearl hath lain, the shell  
Shows yet the sheen ;  
And there's a soul-look that doth tell  
Where love hath been.

### The Words of Lovers

THE sweetest words that tongue has said,  
Or songs that lips have sung,  
Are sad with thoughts of lovers dead,  
And many a silent tongue ;

Yet faintly fragrant as perfume  
Which age on age has lain  
In sepulchres of scented gloom,  
Now used of men again.

## Darkening Years

Love drinks our young sorrows up,  
As the light  
Exhaleth from the blossom-cup  
The dews of night.

Alas, the day when grief grows stronger  
In darkening years !  
Alas, the day when love no longer  
Can dry our tears !

### A Rippled Stone

SANDS, forsaken, keep  
The impress of sea-kisses ;  
As lovers' lips in sleep  
Repeat the day's caresses.

And often hearts hard-grown,  
Deep-hidden and discerned not,  
Have kept the tale in stone  
Of love-tides that returned not.

## Two Dreams

A DREAM of light !—  
A sunlit sea  
Melting in bright  
Infinity.  
O Light ! O Love !  
For ever and evermore !

A dream of night !—  
A stream's dark flow ;  
Glimmering white  
Of chillest snow.  
O Night ! O Death !  
For ever and evermore !

### A Butterfly on a Glacier

THE wind blows warm from Italy  
Across the wastes of snow ;  
And thou, poor bright-winged butterfly,  
Dreamedst—how shouldst thou know ?—  
To follow the delicious breeze  
To new strange flowers on honied leas.

So, wind of Love, thou whisperest  
Of warm, enchanted lands ;  
And lur'st the heart to leave its rest  
And follow Love's commands ;  
Then leav'st it, as the butterfly,  
Alone in icy wastes to die.

## After their Year

How lightly waver down through slanting  
beams  
The leaves grown sere !  
Ev'n so unheeded fall Love's faded dreams  
After their year.

But oh ! the green leaf, and the living love !  
Storms rend the sky,  
And light is darkened in the heaven above  
If these must die.

“Where all Love’s Pilgrims come”

THIS is the grave of Love,  
By tears kept green.  
We know he is dead, sweet Love,  
So long unseen.

And this is his grave, we know ;  
For here in Spring  
The first blue violets blow,  
The first birds sing.

## Star-Glimpses

WHEN the night-wind stirs the pine,  
Comes and goes the sweet star-shine  
Through the boughs—a soul divine.

When love breathes, the deeps of being  
Dazzle suddenly our seeing,  
Like a star through dark boughs fleeing.

## Vibrations

WHAT wonder if, when Love awakes  
Suddenly, the tense heart breaks !  
As at the organ's thundering  
Snaps the lute's responsive string.

Ah, sadder heart, where Love has  
grown  
Stealthily, his name unknown !  
As at some wandering noiseless air  
The wind-harp wakens to despair.

## A Day of Love

DEAR is the sunny between-while  
Of April skies,  
Though black with storm in the mean-  
while  
The clouds arise.

Tho' the clouds that shall burst on  
the morrow  
Be gathering above,  
So dear in a year of sorrow  
Is a day of Love

## What is Love but a Dreamer ?

FLUTTERING, see, from the sunny wall  
Shell-pink petals of roses fall,  
Wavering on to the glassy stream ;  
Softer than kisses given in dream  
By lips that kiss not in waking day ;  
Fairy boats, they are borne away ;  
Airy fancies, that come not again ;  
Lover's visions, that end in pain.

Well may Love wear wistful eyes !  
Well may all love-words end in sighs !  
What is Love but a dreamer—his dream  
What but a rose-leaf dropped on a stream ?

### The Song-Master

Know ye in the days of Spring,  
When the new-leafed woodlands ring,  
Some rich moment when a hush  
Falls on the loud-throated thrush,  
And the gold-mouthed blackbirds pour  
Their Pactolian tides no more ?

Rare, ah ! rare the silence then !  
For, unheard of dull-eared men,  
Love himself, the Master's way,  
Sings the birds to silence.—They,  
Listening, learn, and after sing  
Sweeter all the days of Spring.

### The Herald-Flower

FIRST Love is like the early daffodil  
That lightens the whole world with hope  
of Spring,  
And sees not its own prophecies fulfil.

For when the leaves break forth and thrushes  
sing,  
The herald-flower is drooping. So the chill  
Takes Love when he hath taught the heart  
to sing.

## Lost Leaves of the Greek Anthology

HALCYON, by the gods' decree,  
 For her love and sorrow's wage,  
 Nesteth in a summer sea,  
 Though the winter round doth rage.

Since the gods love lovers so,  
 They may jest at fortune's jars ;  
 Ports they have no pilots know,  
 And in storm behold the stars.

---

From earthy crust  
 The crystal core :  
 From livid rust  
 The shining ore :

From natural lust,  
 Refined thrice o'er,  
 Love the august  
 Which gods adore.

A feeble hand can spoil the flowers  
 That once were all the garden's joy :  
 And lives so bright as once were ours  
 Are spoilt by Love—a little boy.

---

(*With a mirror*)

I send thee, love, for thy sole view,  
 A picture of my heart most true,  
 A portrait marvellous indeed,  
 A secret thou alone canst read,  
 For thou alone beholdest there  
 What always in my heart I bear.

---

So sweet is my love's name that all  
 Seem, chancing in the ways  
 Another by this name to call,  
 To crown her with full praise.

The lyre of Love I locked away,  
 Its chords were bright and true.  
 Is not to-morrow as to-day,  
 To sing Love's service due ?

In rust and dust I turned the key  
 To take again my lyre :  
 The tuneful shell was cracked, ah  
 me !  
 And broke each golden wire.

---

Woman is like the Sea, y-wis  
 That changes every hour, but is  
 The same through all the centuries.



Part III

Man's Love



## In Inferno Sustulit Oculos

You—and I did not know!—  
 Were in the world with me!  
 And nothing between us there  
 But land and sea!

I played at love with women,  
 I played at labour with men;  
 You—and I did not know!—  
 Were there all then.

Nothing of Heaven seemed certain,  
 Nothing of Earth sublime;  
 You—and I did not know!—  
 There all the time.

You, with the angel wings,  
 Who walk in heavenly light,  
 Whom the Great Gulf keeps from me  
 In the fiery night.

## In Exitu Amoris

NEVER a love to be loved again,  
 Long as I live, by me !  
 What, if I drag awhile the chain ?  
 It is broken, and I am free.

Never a song to be sung again,  
 When the woodland thrills with song,  
 And the primrose lightens the darkening  
 lane  
 As the April days grow long !

Never a dream to be dreamed again,  
 When music softly plays,  
 And the soul breaks free from the  
 tyrannous brain,  
 And wanders in starry ways !

Never a heart to be hot again,  
 Or a soul with itself at war !  
 Never a smile to be Heaven to gain,  
 Or a face to be hungered for !

## Cynthia

WHEN she arose, as the maid-moon rises,  
Hallowing the darkened air,  
A thousand silver and gold surprises  
Sprang round her everywhere.

The old worn world was a new strange world,  
Wonder and joy were there ;  
And my heart like a late-born flower unfurled  
That never had hope to be fair.

## A Song of Farewell

FADE, vision bright !  
What clinging hands can stay thee ?  
Die, dream of light !  
What clasping hands can pray thee ?  
Farewell, delight !  
I have no more to say thee.

The gold was gold,  
The little while it lasted ;  
The dream was true,  
Although its joy be blasted ;  
That hour was mine,  
Although so swift it hasted.

## A Love-Song

I HAVE no armour 'gainst thine eyes,  
 When thou dost smile on me ;  
 Mine ears they are not enow wise  
 To shut their doors to thee,  
 When, like the morn-arousing thrush,  
 Thou callest out of love's long hush.

The rain that from the sea arose,  
 A vapour rare and free,  
 By clouds and springs and rivers goes  
 Resistless to the sea.  
 And from the heart, hands, eyes of me  
 Love born of thee draws back to thee.

## Omens and Dreams

THERE was a moaning in earth and air  
 The day we parted,  
 And a wind went by like the breath  
 of despair  
 To the broken-hearted ;  
 But little we dreamed of the coming  
 pain,  
 As we murmured low, To meet again !

But a yellow sunset lit the West,  
 And the snow-clad trees  
 Bowed to the leaden water's breast  
 In the pitiless breeze.  
 Farewell, we said, Farewell for a day !  
 But the sad wind sighed, Farewell for  
 aye !

## The Afterglow

HERE there is rain, and dead leaves whirling :  
I hear not, see not !—In my eyes  
Is sunlight, in my ears the swirling  
Of snow-fed waters.—Which are lies ?

So rich a glory streams about you,  
That one day with you shines afar,  
Down through all darkened days without you,  
As through dull lamp-light shines a star.

## Illumination

OTHER faces, yes,  
Have lent for me  
A moment's loveliness  
To land and sea.

Thine has been as that  
One day of Spring,  
When up the heart flies, at  
Heaven's gate to sing.

### Visa Mihi Veritas

The light of Heaven, that fills all space  
In little stars doth shine ;  
In miniature our souls embrace  
The measureless Divine.

And I have thought a girl's soft eyes  
And simple look might be  
The very Truth of earth and skies  
Made visible to me.

## The Word after Farewell

Not in the night of thy sorrow  
 I fear thy forgetting ;  
 But when the unmindful bright morrow  
     Arise from this darkened day's setting,  
 Oh, let not thy heart put away  
     With its grief all the love of to-day !

In thine eyes, when thou smilest again,  
     Let a softer light be,—  
 As the sun returns after the rain,—  
     Remembering thy last smile on me ;  
 And the roses of Love all thy years  
     Be bright with the pearls of past tears !

## Together, Once

TOGETHER, once, in light of day  
 We stood, and I had leave to say  
 Whate'er I would. Ah, well-a-day !

How could I speak of love ?  
 My heart was happy as the bird  
 That soars and sings, and every word  
 Light as the summer air that stirred  
 The summer leaves above.

Together, now, in dreams alone  
 I stand with thee ; and now my tone  
 Is pleading as the marsh-wind's moan  
 Beside the sad salt sea ;  
 O love, I cry, for sweet Love's sake,  
 O love, reply to my heart's ache,  
 Or, love, I die !—And then I wake,  
 And know thou'rt far from me.

## Outre-Mer

IF thou shouldst call across the sea,  
 I think thy voice would reach to me,  
 I think my heart would answer thee  
     In thine extremest need.  
 Or if, laid deep in sepulchre,  
 Thou calledst me, I dare aver  
 The dust that was my heart should stir,  
     The dust itself should bleed.

Or else, love, if it be not so,  
 What good thing has Love left to show,  
 What thing at all, when Fate says No  
     To all we counted on ?  
 A heart-prick in some wild-flower's  
     scent :  
 A sting in places where we went :  
 A world all sand—all water spent—  
     The morning mirage gone.

## Kisses

THE wave, when the ship goes onward,  
Forgets the kiss of the keel ;  
And the wind, that the arrow startled,  
The keen sweet sting of the steel.

Are kisses so soon forgotten ?  
Nay, what to you and me,  
Who have walked in Eden together,  
Are tales of the wind and the sea !

### Ask of the Nightingale

Ask of the nightingale  
A song, and she shall sing thee  
Such falls as cannot fail  
Some inmost joy to bring thee.

But I, so fond, so fain,  
Am but as echo to thee,  
That calls from walls again  
Thine own sweet name to woo  
thee.

## A Song of Love

If in thine eyes  
 I saw that softer light  
 That in the skies  
 Doth herald Spring's delight,  
 Ah, love, how loud my heart should sing,  
 Ev'n as the blackbird to the Spring !

If on thy cheek  
 I saw that warm hue play  
 That doth bespeak  
 The dawn of a new day,  
 Ah, love, how like the lark should rise  
 My soul in rapture to the skies !

If from thy mouth  
 I heard such whisper low  
 As from the South  
 Doth through the pinewoods blow,  
 How should my whole soul murmur  
 through  
 With music, as the pinewoods do !

## A Silver Night

THE silver shield of heaven all night  
Defend thee, love, and be thy light ;  
And all the wakeful starry eyes  
Keep watch above thee till day rise !

The idly wandering winds, that blow  
Up to thy casement, thence shall go  
More solemn with such joy to bear  
Adown the silver-dusted air.

Till all the pine-tree tongues shall move  
To syllable thy name of love,  
And pass in whispers on to me  
The wind-borne wonder-tale of thee.

## Eheu, Fugaces !

THE wheels whirl faster year by year  
 Adown the slope of life ; I hear  
 The roaring of the Doom more near.

I catch at every flower that grows ;  
 I grasp the thorns and miss the rose ;  
 And life ungovernably goes.

O vision of an angel face,  
 That floatest nigh me for a space,  
 A dream of music and of grace !

I know not what thou art ; but bend  
 Thy soft eyes on me, and defend  
 From the fierce terror of the end !

## A Summer Cloud

YES, it was you,  
The soft cloud in the summer blue,  
So white, so warm,  
That brought the thunder and the  
storm.

So warm, so white,  
With broad rays like a ladder bright,  
That reached to heaven,  
The very highest of the seven.

Earth seemed as fair,  
As crystalline the liquid air,  
As painters drew  
In Italy when Art was new.

Yes, it was you,  
Transfigured earth awhile, then drew  
The dreadful rain  
That drowned a whole life's garnered  
gain.

## A Fallen Idol

IF Dante, when he steeled his soul  
To face the fires of Hell  
By dreams of Beatrice—his goal  
The Heaven where she did dwell :

If, having lost the world for this,  
He, in the lowest Pit  
Had found her whom he thought in  
Bliss,  
My fate and his would fit.

Any Man to any Woman

As some musk-breathing night of May  
When odorous dews grow rare  
On flowers too glad to sleep away  
One hour of life so fair :

As some mid-winter night of pain,  
When every shivering tree  
Grows ice-sheathed from the deadly  
rain—  
These hast thou been to me.

### A Man's Question

WHY did you snap the string,  
When it was rendering  
At your light touch its fullest sweetest  
tone ?

Did it not give its whole  
Of music ? and its soul,  
Was it not utterly and all your own ?

One moment—a low chord  
Ringing with love's reward  
And crownèd hope that trembled into  
peace ;  
Then with light violence  
You smote the string-strained tense  
And bade for ever that soft voice to  
cease.

### The Bird and the Beacon

Poor bird that battlest with the storm  
To gain the beacon-light,  
Then fall'st a wounded woeful form  
Into the gulfs of night !  
A thousand lips that light may bless :  
To thee 'tis the last bitterness.

A light was given to the earth,  
Wearing a woman's name ;  
A thousand tongues have told her worth,  
And deathless is her fame.  
But I was the spent bird, that there  
Salvation sought, and found despair.

## The Story of a Lover's Soul

Oh, the days of a dawning rapture  
     In earth and skies,  
 When a callow soul came tame to the capture  
     Of thy soft eyes ;  
 When a fluttering heart to thy hand came  
     meekly,  
 As a 'scaped cage-bird when the wind blows  
     bleakly !

:

All my heart at thy kisses kindled,  
     As a wine-fed flame ;  
 All my old self was scorched and dwindled,  
     As a new self came ;  
 As a new self grew, like the tender grasses  
 In the blackened forest, when the fire passes.

Oh, the days of the revelation  
     Of the glory of Love !  
 Earth itself was a new creation ;  
     And Heaven above,  
 Height beyond height, unreached, undreamed,  
 Wide open to my winged soul seemed.

Oh, the days of the desolation,  
The days of fire !  
The darkened heavens--the desecration  
Of high desire !  
When the heart, that was Love's Dodona, lies  
A blackened desert where dust-whirls rise.

## The Poisoned Butterfly

How should the butterfly divine,  
 When on the lily's crest he lit,  
 How poisoned was her honey-wine,—  
 How nevermore his wings would flit  
 Like flame among the woods of pine ?

How should the butterfly have guessed,  
 When in the lily's heart he lay,  
 Nor ever folded to the nest,  
 As blossoms fold at close of day,  
 How near the sun was to the West ?

How should the butterfly have deemed  
 The drowsiness that fell on him  
 Was more than when at noon he dreamed,  
 Half drowsy, on the rose's brim—  
 So sweet, so mild his slumber seemed !

But I was such a butterfly,  
 Who fluttered to a flower as fair,  
 Nor dreamed from such delight to fly,  
 So sweetly poisoned was the snare :  
 Now, sick past help, she casts me by.

## Finis sine Fine

THE fires in ashes lie  
That leapt so wildly high ;  
The last faint sparks are dying  
dying ;  
Nothing is left of love  
But vapours ris'n above,  
And ashes coldly lying.

Is this, is this the end ?  
O love, O life, O friend !  
A raptured hour, a swift forgetting,  
And earth for evermore  
Lone as an island shore  
Where breaks no wave but brings  
some old regretting ?

## The Happy Spring

THE lark 'gan sing,  
The lamb was playing,  
The happy Spring  
All hearts obeying.

And then I crept  
Where Love lay sleeping,  
And wept, and wept,  
And still am weeping.

## The One Day

IN a labyrinthine woodland  
I met the Lady May,  
Fresh with showers, sweet with  
flowers,  
And I followed all the day  
Her footsteps in the long grass  
Where the dew was brushed away.

When the even fell she vanished,  
And the night came dark with  
rain ;  
Through the woods the spirits  
banished  
Shrieked fitfully in pain ;  
And I had lived the one day  
That in life comes not again.

### The Magic Maiden

Is there poison on thy lips  
Magic maiden ?  
Like the luscious flowers death-laden  
The wild bee sips,  
In deep forest glooms,  
Whose stars are blooms.

Though mine eyes drank love at thine  
'Twas but pastime,  
Till, alas ! we met the last time ;  
Thy lips touched mine.  
And now I draw to thee,  
Thou moon—I see.

## A Magic Circle

Ah, halting oft is human speech,  
 Darling, whose name is Love's for me ;  
 But as we sat upon the beach  
 No words we needed, each from each ;  
 Such voices found we in the sea,  
 And in the winds that wandered free.

What need to say *I love you*, when  
 Your hair was blown about my face ?  
 While the sea's music seemed to pen  
 A fold enchanted far from men  
 (Such airy walls as wizards trace),  
 To shut the world out from our place.

Oh, wonder of Love's supreme day !  
 That light is faded long ago ;  
 The sea, and all the world, is gray ;  
 But that one spot of earth for aye  
 Is ringed with magic radiance, though  
 A thousand pass there and not know.

## Earth has Forgotten

EARTH has forgotten  
    Her Eden days,  
And the garden hidden  
    From human gaze,  
The angel footsteps,  
    The thornless ways.

O world unwitting !  
    No spot of thee  
But might in a moment  
    All Eden be,  
Could I have my lost love  
    There with me !

## Via Invia

WERE any fain to reach a star,  
 He would not fashion stairways high,  
 Seek foot by foot to climb so far,  
 Or step by step ascend the sky.

Nay, he would scorn the eagle's wings,  
 To dare an undiscovered way,  
 Leap out upon the night's blue rings,  
 And hail at dawn his wished-for day.

I will not vainly seek to thee  
 By ladder-steps of wealth or fame,  
 Till some few feet below me be  
 The world—thy distance still the same.

Love's is an empire larger far  
 Than land or sea or liquid air.  
 Though thou wert further than a star,  
 Love easily should bring me there.

## A Rondel of the Ivy-Leaf

THE ivy-leaf she loves to wear  
 In token of Fidelity ;  
 For ever-green's the ivy tree,  
 And she's as faithful as she's fair.

Yet scarce my breaking heart can bear  
 For ever at her breast to see  
 The ivy-leaf she loves to wear  
 In token of Fidelity.

Were she less faithful or less fair !  
 O Love, forgive the blasphemy !  
 But since her love is not for me  
 To me 'tis token of Despair,  
 The ivy-leaf she loves to wear.

## A Rondel of Absence

WHEN my dear lady is away,  
 Her lightest word is then my law ;  
 As wayward sands, when tides withdraw,  
 Repeat the wavelets' lightest play.

Though daily I should disobey  
 When she is by, and show no awe,  
 When my dear lady is away,  
 Her lightest word is then my law.

Fierce as a flagellant I flay  
 My own back for the slightest flaw,  
 That she would pardon if she saw :  
 I pardon nothing in that day  
 When my dear lady is away.

## Love Sonnets. I

FROM woods, from mountains, and from lonely  
streams,

But most from fair girl-faces I have drawn  
The inspiration which in after dreams  
Floods all the spirit, like a golden dawn.

But now to be half-human, as a Faun,  
Or more than human, as an Angel, seems  
Alone desirable ; whom fancy deems  
Awake to beauty, but from love withdrawn.

For on thy loveliness if I could gaze  
And feel, not human love, but that desire,  
Spirit exalting, which the stars inspire  
On summer nights or seas on summer days :  
Then might I read, writ clear in human  
eyes,  
The undeciphered speech of seas and skies.

## Love Sonnets. II

THY face should be a Tintoret's despair ;  
 Nor Raphael nor Leonardo could,  
 Limning thy beauty on their lifeless wood,  
 Reveal thyself that art chief beauty there.  
 Though all the world before thy picture  
 stood,  
 And called it beautiful beyond compare,  
 I only might stand by in bitter mood,  
 Searching that fair face for the self more fair.

Swift clouds they paint, winds blowing, seas  
 in madness,  
 The lightning's flashing, and the rainbow's  
 sheen ;  
 Thee may they paint, as some men see  
 and hear thee ;  
 But who can give the glory, who the gladness,  
 The hope, the sanctity, that is not seen,  
 But streams into my soul when I am  
 near thee ?

## Love Sonnets. III

Now hath the ageing year forgot thee, June,  
 And doteth on the Mœnad month, October;  
 How harlot-like she wastes his wealth ! How  
 soon  
 His gold shall all be gone, and he left sober !  
 Yet can I not forget thy days of swoon,  
 Dear June, at Henley ; though the daft  
 disrober  
 Beat his leaf-tatters all the afternoon  
 About me, playing mad to please October.

Still seems the dull day must be brighter  
 there,  
 The trees full-leafed, the meadow-grass  
 full green ;  
 While Thames, here turbid, there steals  
 softly on  
 A dream of silver, her light boat to bear.  
 Yet well I know how changed is that fair  
 scene :  
 Or hides it in some mystic Avalon ?

## Love Sonnets. IV

AND all my dream of her—is that but dream-ing ?

Was it not heaven at her side to be ?  
Or this too, is it as a mirage gleaming,  
A desert that, looked back on, seems a sea ?  
A desert, that day ? Nay then, what redeem-ing

Hath this day ?—Speak, dull memory ! Was not she  
The vision of the Grail, all heaven streaming  
About her, for all white souls, and for me ?

Not so : though now a light is on those hours,  
Most were not golden that I had with her,  
Many were maddened.—Peace ! my  
dream is now  
More true than memory ; 'tis a dream of  
flowers ;  
That was a day of flowers : no wind did  
stir,  
And I was with her 'neath the willow-bough.

## Love Sonnets. V

I WAKE from one more Circe-draught of love,  
 And all my soul is sick with sulphur fumes  
 And poisonous salt savours. Yet, above  
 The noisome hell-reek that my soul  
 consumes,  
 'The blood-taste and the blackness, I am 'ware  
 Of some o'erwhelming terror that before  
 O'ertook me not in my most dark despair ;  
 A' cold wind drives me to some dreadful  
 door.

Death is it ? I have long been friends with  
 Death.

Hell is it ? I have oft been housed in Hell.  
 It is not Madness, though it maddeneth,  
 Nor fanged Remorse—I know Remorse  
 too well.

What, Love ! were those but flittings, this thy  
 flying ?

What, Love ! were those thy slumbers, this  
 thy dying ?



Part IV

Maiden's Love



## The Story of the Rose

THE rose said, Yes !  
 And the butterfly—  
 Ah, you may guess  
 His ecstasy !

How like a kiss his wing-plumes brushed  
 Her petals, and how fair she blushed.

The rose said, Stay !  
 But another rose  
 Beside bloomed gay :  
 The bright wings rose,  
 Across the upturned face they cast  
 A moment's shadow, and then passed.

But ere the bird  
 Of night was calling,  
 Unseen, unheard,  
 Were petals falling,  
 Like drops in caverns, leaf by leaf,  
 Done with life, and love, and grief.

## To-day He Loves Me

To-DAY he loves me !—Time, stand still !  
 Haste not, sun, behind the hill !  
 To-day he loves me : no to-morrow  
 Can touch this one to-day with sorrow.

As a crystal well o'erspills  
 With sweet water from the hills,  
 So my heart o'erbrims with blisses,  
 Of looks, of love-words, and of kisses.

And through many a day of drought  
 Love shall come to draw thereout,  
 Singing low—though this to-day  
 Be then a year-old yesterday—  
 “To-day he loves me !” (’Tis Love’s  
 way).

“Si vous croyez que je vais dire.”

My lips must say not,  
My eyes betray not  
    My heart's hid treasure ;  
My hands must deaden,  
My feet go leaden,  
    Not leap in measure.

For how they would rate me,  
Preach me and prate me,  
    Scoff at and scold me,  
Should they discover  
Who is my lover,  
    And what he has told me !

Ce que vivent les Roses.

THE stream, that flows for ever,  
 Whispered to the daffodil,  
 “Would you not be as the river,  
 Ever living, ever flowing,  
 Never fading, never knowing  
 Death the chill ?”

But the daffodil made answer,  
 “I have lived one day of Spring,  
 When the wind with me was dancer ;—  
 Oh, the brightness ! Oh, the fleet-  
 ness !  
 Oh, the rapture ! What more sweet-  
 ness  
 Could life bring ?”

## I and You

MAN differeth from man, as leaf from leat,  
As star from star ;  
And ev'n the hearts that suffer the same grief  
Are parted far.

And ev'n the souls, that through the windows  
gaze  
Of wistful eyes,  
Are aureoled each for each, as by the haze  
Of wintry skies.

## A Woman's Question

WHY do you love me so well ?  
 I am only a woman :  
 No angel from Heaven or Hell,  
 But earthly and human.

And you—by your eyes' flame I see,  
 By your heart-beat I know it,  
 Have dreamed me a Beatrice—me,  
 You Dante, my poet.

Shall I yield you my soul-stuff to be  
 Your soul-fire's fuel ?  
 There is that would take fire in me,  
 But were it not cruel

To feed for one hour a fire,  
 How sacred soever ?  
 Then see my delight, your desire,  
 In ashes for ever ?

## Not in Naxos

AN August day—a sky o'ercast—

A gray Down sloping to the sea—  
A sea like a face where death has passed,  
Motionless but for misery.

Hardly a breath in the heavy air,

Hardly a wave on the heaving tide ;  
The very pebbles were silent there,  
Chatterers stilled by the great despair.

No voice was there, nor sound, beside

A faint dull moaning that rose and died,  
The mere heart-beat of the ocean wide.

Above was the waste Down, bare and blind,

The dancing place of the winter wind ;

Now silent and lone as the wan lamps show  
The dancing rooms when the dancers go.

Half-way down, from the cliff-face lent

A tower of chalk, like a battlement,

With a crest of waving grass, like hair.

Motionless sat a maiden there ;

Her locks streamed loose, her lips were pale :

Her eyes were fixed on a far-off sail.

An old-world story, a far-off woe,  
Made beautiful by its long ago ?  
Nay, 'tis a different story this !  
Yet on her lips is her lover's kiss ;  
Yet in her heart is the agony ;  
For this was yesterday, and I,  
Who tell it you in the talk of men  
I was the Ariadne then.

### A Story heard on a Violin

SHE loved. Her whole heart grew around  
 A baser nature, which it bound  
 With beauty, as the purple vine,  
 Which makes the stone or stem divine.

She lost. His grosser nature woke  
 And from her glorious bondage broke ;  
 And she was left, a plant forlorn,  
 With drooping leaves and tendrils torn.

Know ye the maiden ?—I have met  
 One like her. In her eyes lay yet  
 The pain. From viol-strings she drew  
 A human cry that thrilled me through.

## A Revolt

PALE and passionless star,  
Steadily wheeling afar  
From the golden Sun, thy lord !  
What is thy love's reward ?  
Cycles ever the same,  
Timeless, tireless, tame.

Rather be my love's fashion  
The fiery meteor's passion,  
That scorns the planet's orbit,  
    And ever flies to the Sun,  
Till its glorious lover absorb it,  
    And life ends when love is won.

### Planctus Displacentis

WHY was I not born fair ?  
 Not as world-famous Helen, past  
 compare,  
 Drawing all hearts and eyes  
 To madness or magnificent emprise :

But as some village maid,  
 Chosen May-queen beneath the hawthorn  
 shade,  
 Not fair enough to move  
 All women's jealousy, but one man's love.



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